Hallelujah! President Trump Actually Wants To Give Peace a Chance

By David Stockman

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Wow! These are the most powerful and consequential 36 words spoken by any US President. Ever.

"One of the first meetings I want to have is with President Xi of China, President Putin of Russia, and I want to say, ***'let's cut our military budget in half.'*** *And we can do that."*

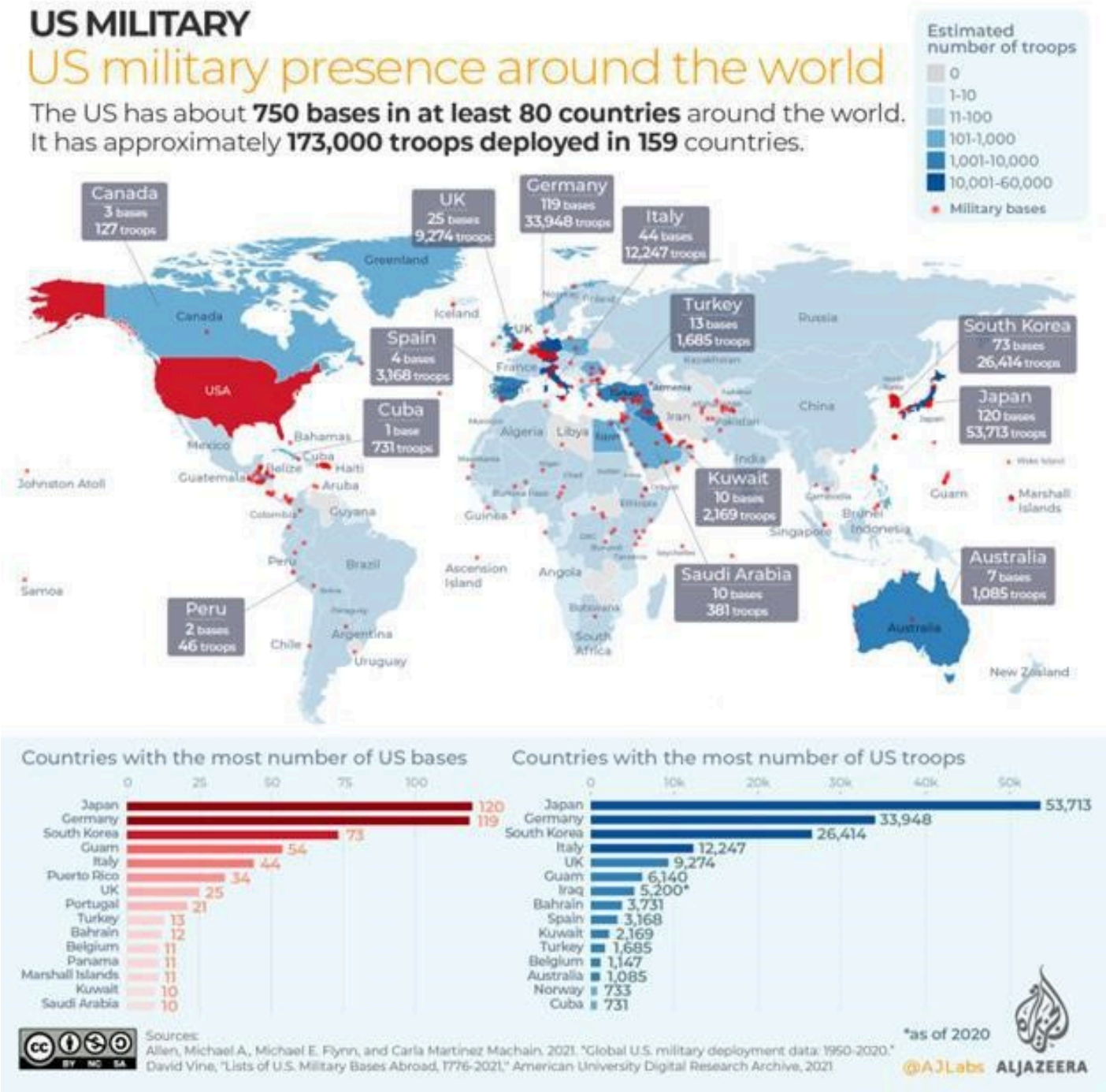
Yes, from the Donald's lips to god's ear and all that. The practicalities and obstacle-strewn path from here to there may well be insuperable.

But what our twice-baked President has actually done is to blow the Overton Window of permissible national security discussion wide open. Indeed, once you say that you intend to table this fear-obliterating idea at a joint summit with the two endlessly demonized leaders of America's purported leading foes,

everything—and we do mean everything— heretofore prohibited is on the table for fresh, open discussion.

After all, you don't need to be a student of the intricacies of the $850 billion defense budget to recognize that when you cut the Pentagon's rations by half the whole globalist national security framework left over from the Cold War's demise 34 years ago collapses.

That's because you would have to bring the Empire home—and all the national security apparatus that goes with it. To wit, 750 foreign bases and 173,000 US troops posted in 159 countries; globe spanning Navy and Air Force operations; and alliances large and small, from NATO to the Taiwan Straits, to so-called peacekeeping missions throughout the Middle East and north Africa.



Stated differently, what you can fund on just 50% of today's defense budget, as we amplify below, is an invincible strategic nuclear deterrent and an impenetrable defense of America's coastlines, airspace and sovereign territory.

And yet, and yet. That's all we actually need! It would fully accomplish the fundamental national security goal of keeping America's 347 million citizens free and safe from Bangor Maine to San Diego California.

Indeed, whether he recognizes it or not, President Trump's bold entreaty would amount to eschewing every notion of Empire. It would pave the way for returning to the nation's pre-1914 policy as a peaceful Republic, safely minding its own business behind the wondrous gifts of Providence—the great Atlantic and Pacific Ocean moats which separate the American homeland from any serious potential military foe anywhere on the planet.

At the present time and for the foreseeable future, there are only two nations even remotely capable of posing a military threat to the American homeland—Russia and the People' Republic of China. Yet the bottom line strategic reality is that Russia doesn't have anywhere near the requisite economic heft to threaten America, and China doesn't have a even a semblance of the economic running room to go on a global military aggression campaign.

With respect to Russia and despite all the demonetization of Putin, no one has even attempted to make the case that he's so stupid as to believe his $2 trillion of commodity-based GDP is

any match for the world-leading technology-based $30 trillion GDP of the United States.

Indeed, the whole Russian ogre thing is based on a purely fanciful derivative case. Namely, the vague arm-waving claim that Putin will take the Baltics next, then Poland and thereafter march on thru the Brandenburg Gate into Berlin on the way to France, the Low Countries and across the English Channel to London—assuming Putin is also stupid enough to want to occupy the economic basket case of a Starmerized Little England.

In other words, implicit in Washington's current consensus foreign policy posture is the notion that Russia is actually a big threat only after it attacks, occupies, pacifies and militarizes the entire continent of Europe!

That's the only route by which Moscow can possibly get the economic heft, manpower and military means to materially threaten the US. In the end, therefore, the threat is not the Ruuskies per se, but, apparently, Russified Germans, Poles and Frogs.

Of course, there is not a shred of evidence that this is Putin's plan or that he would remotely have the economic and military

wherewithal to accomplish such a sinister purpose were he so inclined, which most evidently he is not. To the contrary, Putin's aim by all the evidence seems to be far, far more modest: Namely, to keep NATO out of his backyard in an ancient piece of the Russian Empire that was called Novorossiya or New Russia during most of its history.

That was the name of the Donbas and Black Sea rim region before Lenin and Stalin created the artificial country of "Ukraine" for the purely administrative convenience of operating their brutal tyranny. Yet in even attempting to retake the Russian half of Ukraine, Putin is having a hard time mustering the requisite military power—to say nothing of conquering the rest of Europe.

Fortunately, VP Vance has already let the cat out of the bag, and it shows exactly why Russia is not on the warpath toward the conquest of Europe. To wit, after the impending Trump-Putin deal there will be no NATO in Ukraine and the country will be partitioned between the Russian-speaking regions of the Donbas, Crimea and the Black Sea rim, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian and Polish speaking regions of the west and on the left bank of the Dnieper River, on the other.

That's all Putin every wanted anyway, and it will be the proof in the pudding that discredits the hideous notion that Washington must fight Russia by proxy over there in order to not have to fight it in Luxembourg or on the cliffs of Dover.

That is to say, once the war is settled and Ukraine partitioned, Putin's special military operation will come to an abrupt halt at whatever turns out to be the line of contact between the breakaway republics and the rump of Ukraine. In turn, that will prove in spades that there exists not even the remotest prospect of a Russifed Europe, and therefore any real Russian threat to the security of the American homeland.

So, yes, the defense budget can be cut by 50% in part because the 62,000 US troops shown above that are now stationed in Europe could be brought home. Even more importantly, US NATO membership and commitments could also be abandoned, meaning that the ridiculous idea of being committed under Article 5 to the mutal defense of such nationlets as North Macedonia, whose 10,000 man active duty military is smaller than 12,000 man police force of Chicago, would also expire.

With respect to China, the single most important thing to recognize is that it is the very opposite of the old Soviet Empire, which was based on economic autarky and scant trading

relationships with the world outside of the Warsaw Pact. Accordingly, had it been both inclined and capable of offensive military aggression toward the rest of Europe and or even the US —for which the now open archives of the old Soviet Union reveal scant evidence— there would have been no collateral disruption of its basic economic function. The latter was purely an internally-focused regime of centralized state socialism, which, needless to say, didn't work but didn't depend upon commerce with the so-called "free world", either.

By contrast, after Mao was sent off his rewards in Red Heaven, China pivoted sharply to the outside world under the leadership of Mr.Deng and his successors; and they did so under the banner of so-called Red Capitalism, which amounted to an extreme version of export mercantilism.

Consequently, China's exports soared by nearly **15X** during the two decades between 2000 and 2022, rising from $250 billion to $3.6 trillion per year. So doing, the Chicoms essentially took themselves hostage, meaning that every province, city, village, factory, rail line, trucking operations, warehouse and port operation along the length and breadth of China got deeply entangled with just-in-time economic production for customers accross the planet, as depicted in the graphic below. Accordingly, China's economy would collapse on the spot were Beijing to

disrupt the daily flow of $10 billion of merchandise goods to Europe, the Americas and the balance of Asia.

Indeed, had its post-Mao leadership been hell bent on foreign conquest, which most clearly it was not, the Beijing regime's very survival would have been compromised by the resulting disruption to the greatest factory-economy the world has ever seen. For crying out loud, Washington wasted 59,000 American lives and upwards of 3 million Vietnamese lives before eventually fleeing from Vietnam, yet afterwards the Chinese didn't even try to capture Hanoi—the domino theory to the contrary notwithstanding.

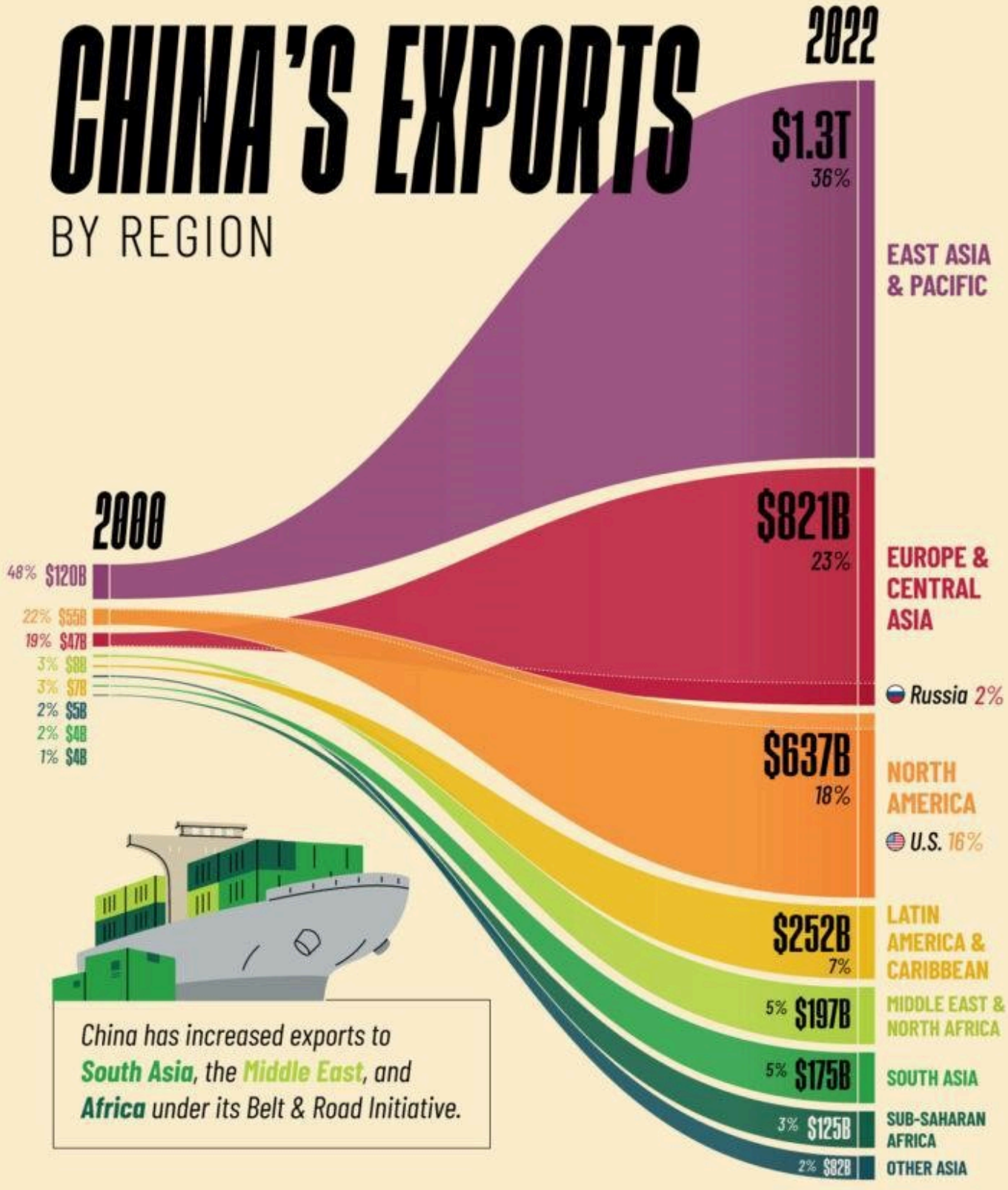
In other words, China is inherently not a military threat to the US, nor is there any evidence that it is expansionist—even in its own region. There is undoubtedly a reason why after thousands of years, the Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Indonesians, Malayans and Filipinos stick to themselves; and also why a reunification of the Han Chinese on the mainland with their kin on Formosa would have virtually zero implications for the rest of the region.

The state of Taiwan exits only because Washington stood it up in 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek lost the civil war fair and square to Mao and the reds. Were Washington to step aside, it is likely that

in a short time the Korean peninsula would be hardly distinguishable from Shanghai across the Yellow Sea.

That is to say, the US does not need the massively expensive 7th Fleet and US Marines and large parts of the Air Force to contain China. The latter's giant Ponzi economy perched as it is on $50 trillion of debt and upwards of $4 trillion per year of exports does all the containing that America's military security actually requires.

CHINA'S EXPORTS BY REGION



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At the end of he day, if Donald Trump's "America First"-focused foreign policy means anything at all, it's that the current $1 trillion national security budget is *double the size* that an adequate homeland defense shield actually requires. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that in relentless pursuit of its own self-serving aggrandizement, the military/industrial/intelligence complex has massively inflated America's Warfare State into an "extra-large" when what is really needed in the world of 2025 is a snug-fitting "small."

And now, the Donald has dramatically opened the door to downsizing America's crushing national security budget to exactly that, thereby paving the way for a return to Thomas Jefferson's wise admonition urging,

"...peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, ***entangling alliances with none.***"

Indeed, the way for the Trump Administration to shoe-horn roughly $1 trillion of defense spending into a $500 billion budget was laid out a long time ago by the great Senator Robert Taft at the very dawn of the Cold War. He argued that the modest threat to homeland security presented by the war-ravaged corpus of the Soviet Union and the collectivist disaster imposed on China by Mao could have been readily handled with–

- An overwhelming strategic nuclear retaliatory capacity that would have deterred any possibility of nuclear attack or blackmail.
- A Fortress America conventional defense of the continental shorelines and air space that would have been exceedingly easy to stand up, given that the Soviet Union had no Navy worth speaking of and China had devolved into industrial and agricultural anarchy owing to Mao's catastrophic experiments with collectivization.

That eminently correct Taftian framework has never changed since then—even as the technology of nuclear and conventional warfare has evolved apace. For modest military spending Washington can keep its nuclear deterrent fully effective and maintain a formidable Fortress America defense of the homeland without any of the apparatus of Empire and no American boots on foreign soil, at all.

In fact, the case for a true America First policy––that is, returning to the 1914 status quo ante and a proper Fortress America military posture––has powerfully strengthened during the last three decades. That's because in today's world, the only theoretical military threat to America's homeland security is the possibility of nuclear attack or blackmail. That is to say, the threat that one of its two nuclear adversaries could develop a

First Strike capacity so overwhelming, lethal, and effective that it could simply call out checkmate and demand Washington's surrender.

Fortunately, neither Russia nor China has anything close to the Nuclear First Strike force that would be needed to totally overwhelm America's triad nuclear deterrent and thereby avoid a retaliatory annihilation of their own country and people if they attempted to strike first. After all, the US has 3,700 active nuclear warheads, of which about 1,800 are operational at any point in time. In turn, these are spread under the seven seas, in hardened silos and among a bomber fleet of 66 B-2 and B-52s–all beyond the detection or reach of any other nuclear power.

For instance, the Ohio class nuclear submarines each have 20 missile tubes, with each missile carrying an average of 4-5 warheads. That's 90 independently targetable warheads per boat. At any given time 12 of the 14 Ohio class nuclear subs are actively deployed, and spread around the oceans of the planet within a firing range of 4,000 miles.

So at the point of attack that's ***1,080 deep-sea nuclear warheads*** cruising along the ocean bottoms that would need to be identified, located, and neutralized before any would-be nuclear attacker or blackmailer even gets started. Indeed, with respect to

the “Where’s Waldo?” aspect of it, the sea-based nuclear force alone is a powerful guarantor of America’s homeland security. Even Russia’s vaunted hypersonic missiles couldn’t find or take out by surprise the US sea-based deterrent.

And then there are the roughly 300 nukes aboard the 66 strategic bombers, which also are not sitting on a single airfield Pearl Harbor style waiting to be obliterated either, but are constantly rotating in the air and on the move. Likewise, the 400 Minuteman III missiles are spread out in extremely hardened silos deep underground across a broad swath of the upper Midwest. Each missile currently carries one nuclear warhead in compliance with the Start Treaty but could be MIRV’d in response to a severe threat, thereby further compounding and complicating an adversary’s First Strike calculus.

Needless to say, there is no way, shape, or form that America’s nuclear deterrent can be neutralized by a blackmailer. And that gets us to the heart of the case as to how the Trump Administration could actually cut the defense budget by 50%. To wit, according to the most recent CBO estimates the nuclear triad will cost only about ***$75 billion per year*** to maintain over the next decade, including allowances for periodic weapons upgrades.

That's right. The core component of America's military security ***requires only 7% of today's massive military budget*** as detailed on a system-by-system basis in the table below. Thus, in 2023 the nuclear triad itself cost just $28 billion plus another $24 billion for related stockpiles and command, control, and warning infrastructure.

Moreover, the key component of this nuclear deterrent–the sea-based ballistic missile force–is estimated to cost just ***$188 billion*** over the *entire* next decade. That's only ***1.9%*** of the $10 trillion CBO defense baseline for that period.

10-Year Cost Of US Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Per CBO Estimates, 2023 to 2032

	2023			Total, 2023–2032		
	DoD	DOE	Total	DoD	DOE	Total
CBO's Projections of Budgeted Amounts for Nuclear Forces[a]						
Nuclear delivery systems and weapons						
Strategic nuclear delivery systems and weapons						
Ballistic missile submarines	11.4	1.2	12.7	172	16	188
Intercontinental ballistic missiles	6.4	0.9	7.3	103	16	118
Bombers	4.2	1.7	5.8	52	11	63
Other DoD nuclear activities[b]	1.6	n.a.	1.6	19	n.a.	19
Subtotal	23.6	3.8	27.5	346	43	389
Tactical nuclear delivery systems and weapons	0.6	0.4	1.0	5	2	6
Nuclear weapons laboratories and supporting activities						
Stockpile services	n.a.	1.1	1.1	n.a.	12	12
Facilities and infrastructure	n.a.	7.3	7.3	n.a.	79	79
Other stewardship and support activities[c]	n.a.	5.1	5.1	n.a.	57	57
Subtotal	n.a.	13.4	13.4	n.a.	148	148
Subtotal, Nuclear Delivery Systems and Weapons	24.2	17.7	41.9	351	192	543
Command, control, communications, and early-warning systems						
Command and control	1.5	n.a.	1.5	24	n.a.	24
Communications	2.7	n.a.	2.7	34	n.a.	34
Early-warning	6.3	n.a.	6.3	58	n.a.	58
Subtotal, Command, Control, Communications, and Early-Warning Systems	10.5	n.a.	10.5	117	n.a.	117
Total Budgeted Amounts for Nuclear Forces	**34.7**	**17.7**	**52.4**	**468**	**192**	**660**
CBO's Estimates of Additional Costs Based on Historical Cost Growth	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	56	40	96
Total Estimated Cost of Nuclear Forces	**34.7**	**17.7**	**52.4**	**524**	**232**	**756**

So the question recurs with respect to the CBO's current $989 billion baseline spending level for defense a couple of years down he road. After setting aside $75 billion for the strategic nuclear triad, how much of the remaining $900 billion+ would actually be needed for a conventional Fortress America defense of the continental shorelines and airspace?

The starting point is that neither Russia nor China have the military capability, economic throw-weight or intention to attack the American homeland with conventional forces. To do that they would need a massive military armada including a Navy and

Air Force many times the size of current US forces, huge air and sealift resources, and humongous supply lines and logistics capacities that have never been even dreamed of by any other nation on the planet.

They would also need an initial GDP of say $50 trillion to $100 trillion to sustain what would be the most colossal mobilization of weaponry and materiel in human history. And that's to say nothing of needing to be ruled by suicidal leaders—which characterizes neither Putin or Xi— willing to risk the nuclear destruction of their own countries, allies, and economic commerce in order to accomplish, what? Occupy Denver?

The entire idea that there is currently an existential threat to America's security is just nuts. After all, when it comes to the requisite economic heft, Russia's GDP is a scant $2 trillion, not the $50 trillion that would be needed for it to put invasionary forces on the New Jersey shores. And its defense budget is $75 billion, which amounts to about *four weeks of waste* in Washington's $900 billion monster.

Likewise, China doesn't have the sustainable GDP heft to even think about landing on the California shores, notwithstanding Wall Street's endless kowtowing to the China Boom. The fact is,

China has accumulated in excess of $50 trillion of debt in barely two decades!

Therefore, it didn't grow organically in the historic capitalist mode; it printed, borrowed, spent, and built like there was no tomorrow. As we indicated above, therefore, the resulting simulacrum of prosperity would not last a year if its $3.6 trillion global export market--the source of the hard cash that keeps its Ponzi upright–were to crash, which is exactly what would happen if it tried to invade America.

To be sure, China's totalitarian leaders are immensely misguided and downright evil from the perspective of their oppressed population. But they are not stupid. They stay in power by keeping the people relatively fat and happy and would never risk bringing down what amounts to an economic house of cards that has not even a vague approximation in human history.

Indeed, when it comes to the threat of a conventional military invasion, the vast Atlantic and Pacific moats are even greater barriers to foreign military assault in the 21st century than they so successfully proved to be in the 19th century. That's because today's advanced surveillance technology and anti-ship missiles and flocks of drones would consign an enemy naval armada to

Davy Jones' Locker nearly as soon as it steamed out of its own territorial waters.

The fact is, in an age when the sky is flush with high-tech surveillance assets neither China nor Russia could possibly secretly build, test and muster for surprise attack a massive conventional force armada without being noticed in Washington. There can be no repeat of the Japanese strike force–the *Akagi, Kaga, Soryu, Hiryu, Shokaku, and Zuikaku*–steaming across the Pacific toward Pearl Harbor sight unseen.

Indeed, America's two ostensible "enemies" actually have no offensive or invasionary capacity at all. Russia has only one aircraft carrier–a 1980s-era relic which has been in dry dock for repairs since 2017 and is equipped with neither a phalanx of escort ships nor a suite of attack and fighter aircraft–and at the moment not even an active crew.

Likewise, China has just three aircraft carriers–two of which are refurbished rust buckets purchased from the remnants of the old Soviet Union (actually Ukraine!), and which carriers do not even have modern catapults for launching their strike aircraft.

In short, neither China nor Russia will be steaming their tiny 3 and 1 carrier battle groups toward the shores of either California

or New Jersey any time soon. An invasionary force that had any chance at all of surviving a US fortress defense of cruise missiles, drones, jet fighters, attack submarines, and electronics warfare would need to be ***100X larger.***

So let us repeat: There is simply no GDP in the world––$2 trillion for Russia or $18 trillion for China––that is even remotely close in size to the $50 trillion or even $100 trillion that would be needed to support such an invasionary force *without capsizing the home economy.*

Donald Trump is therefore on to something huge. Namely, that Washington's globe-spanning conventional war-fighting capability is completely obsolete!

Fully one-third of a century after the Soviet Empire collapsed and China went the Red Capitalist route of deep global economic integration, it amounts to utterly extraneous and unneeded muscle.

For want of doubt, consider that Washington equips, trains, and deploys an armed force of 2.86 million. But rather than being devoted to homeland defense, the overwhelmingly purpose is to support missions of offense, invasion, and occupation all over the planet.

As depicted in the graphic above, this obsolete Empire First military posture still includes among others–

- 119 facilities and nearly 34,000 troops in Germany.
- 44 facilities and 12,250 troops in Italy.
- 25 facilities and 9,275 troops in the UK.
- 120 facilities and 53,700 troops in Japan.
- 73 facilities and 26,400 troops in South Korea

All of this unnecessary military muscle stands as a costly monument to the hoary theory of collective security, which led to the establishment of NATO in 1949 and its regional clones thereafter. Yet the case for Empire and its global alliances was dubious even back then. In fact, the now open archives of the old Soviet Union prove conclusively that Stalin had neither the wherewithal nor intention to invade Western Europe.

What military capacity the Soviet Union did resurrect after the bloodletting with Hitler's armies was heavily defensive in character and lumbering in capabilities. So the alleged communist political threat in Europe could have been wrangled out by these nations at the polls, not on the battlefield. They did not need NATO to stop an imminent Soviet invasion.

Needless to say, once the Washington-based Empire of bases, alliances, collective security, and relentless CIA meddling in the internal affairs of foreign countries was established, it stuck like glue–even as the facts of international life proved over and over again that the Empire wasn't needed.

That is to say, the alleged "lessons" of the interwar period and WWII were falsely played and replayed. The aberrational rise of Hitler and Stalin did not happen because the good people of England, France, and America slept through the 1920s and 1930s.

Instead, they arose from the ashes of Woodrow Wilson's pointless intervention in a quarrel of the Old World that was none of America's business. Yet the arrival in 1918 of two million American doughboys and massive flows of armaments and loans from Washington enabled a vindictive peace of the victors at Versailles rather than an end to a desultory world war that would have left all the sides exhausted, bankrupt, and demoralized, and their respective domestic war parties subject to massive repudiation at the polls.

As it happened, however, Wilson's intervention on the stalemated battlefields of the Western Front gave birth to revolution in Russia and Lenin and Stalin, while his machinations with the victors at Versailles fostered the rise of Hitler.

To be sure, in the end the former did fortunately bring about the demise of the latter at Stalingrad. But that should have been the end of the matter in 1945, and, in fact, the world was almost there. After the victory parades, demobilization and normalization of civilian life proceeded apace all around the world.

Alas, Washington's incipient War Party of military contractors and globetrotting operatives and officialdom gestated in the heat of World War II was not about to go quietly into the good night. Instead, the Cold War was midwifed on the banks of the Potomac when President Truman fell under the spell of war hawks like Secretary James Byrnes, Dean Acheson, James Forrestal, and the Dulles brothers, who were loath to go back to their mundane lives as civilian bankers, politicians, or peacetime diplomats.

So, in the post-war period world communism was not really on the march and the nations of the world were not implicated in falling dominoes, nor were they gestating incipient

Hitlers and Stalin's. But the new proponents of Empire insisted they were just the same, and that national security required the far-flung empire that is still with us today.

So there is no mystery, therefore, as to why the Forever Wars go on endlessly. Or why at a time when Uncle Sam is hemorrhaging red ink like never before, a large bipartisan majority has seen fit to authorize $1.1 trillion per year for vastly excessive military muscle and wasteful foreign aid boondoggles that do absolutely nothing for America's homeland security.

In effect, Washington has morphed into a freak of world history––a planetary War Capital dominated by a panoptic complex of arms merchants, paladins of foreign intervention and adventure, and Warfare State nomenklatura. Never before has there been assembled and concentrated under a single state authority a hegemonic force possessing such enormous fiscal resources and military wherewithal.

Not surprisingly, the War Capital on the Potomac is Orwellian to the core. War is always and everywhere described as the promotion of peace. Its jackboot of global hegemony is gussied up in the beneficent-appearing form of alliances and treaties. These are ostensibly designed to promote a "rules-based order" and collective security for the benefit of mankind, not simply the proper goals of peace, liberty, safety, and prosperity within America's homeland.

As we have seen, however, the whole intellectual foundation of this enterprise is false. The planet is not crawling with all-powerful would-be aggressors and empire-builders who must be stopped cold at their own borders, lest they devour the freedom of all their neighbors near and far.

Nor is the DNA of nations perennially infected with incipient butchers and tyrants like Hitler and Stalin. They were one-time accidents in history and fully distinguishable from the standard run of everyday tinpots which actually do arise periodically. But the latter mainly disturb the equipoise of their immediate neighborhoods, not the peace of the planet.

So America's homeland security does not depend upon a far-flung array of alliances, treaties, military bases, and foreign influence operations. In today's world there are no Hitlers, actual or latent, to stop. The whole framework of Pax Americana and the Washington-based promotion and enforcement of a "rules-based" international order is an epic blunder.

In that regard, the Founding Fathers got it right more than 200 years ago during the infancy of the Republic. As John Quincy Adams approvingly held,

"[America] has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when conflict has been for principles to which she clings...She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own."

Needless to say, peaceful commerce is invariably far more beneficial to nations large and small than meddling, interventionism, and military engagement. In today's world it would be the default state of play on the international chessboard, save for the Great Hegemon on the banks of the Potomac. That is to say, the main disturbance of the peace today is invariably fostered by the self-appointed peacemaker, who, ironically, is inherently the least threatened large nation on the entire planet.

The starting point for a Trumpian "America First" military posture and a 50% cut of the military budget, therefore, is the drastic downsizing of the nearly one-million man standing US Army.

The latter would have no uses abroad because there would be no cause for wars of foreign invasion and occupation, while the odds of any foreign battalions and divisions reaching America's shores are virtually non-existent. With a proper coastline garrison of missiles, drones, attack submarines, and jet fighters any invading

army would become shark bait long before it saw the shores of California or New Jersey.

Yet the 462,000 active-duty army soldiers at $112,000 each have an annual budget cost of $55 billion while the 506,000 army reserve forces at $32,000 each cost upwards of $16 billion. And on top of this force structure, of course, you have $77 billion for operations and maintenance, $27 billion for procurement, $22 billion for RDT&E, and $4 billion for everything else (based on the FY 2025 budget request).

In all, the current Army budget totals nearly ***$200 billion***, and virtually all of that massive expenditure–nearly 3X the total defense budget of Russia–***is deployed in the service of Empire,*** not homeland defense. It could readily be cut by 70% or $140 billion–meaning that the US Army component of a $450 billion Fortress America defense budget would absorb just $60 billion annually.

Likewise, the US Navy and Marine Corps spends $55 billion annually on 515,000 active-duty forces and another $3.7 billion on 88,000 reserves. Yet if you look at the core requirements of a Fortress America defense posture, these forces and expenses are way over the top, as well.

By core missions we refer to the Navy component of the strategic nuclear triad and the Navy's large force of attack and cruise missile submarines. As it happens, here are the current manpower requirements for these key forces:

- ***14 Ohio-class Strategic Nuclear Subs:*** There are two crews of 155 officers and enlisted men for each boat, resulting in a direct force requirement of 4,400 and an overall total of 10,000 military personnel when Admirals, overhead, support, and woke compliance is included (or not).
- ***@50 Attack/Cruise Missile Subs:*** There are two crews of 132 officers and enlisted men for each boat, for a direct requirement of 13,000 and an overall total of 20,000 including Admirals and overhead etc.

In short, the core Navy missions of a Fortress America defense involve about 30,000 officers and enlisted men or less than ***6%*** of the current active-duty force of the Navy/Marine Corps. On the other hand, the totally unnecessary carrier battle groups, which operate exclusively in the service of Empire, have crews of 8,000 each when you count the escort ships and suites of aircraft.

So, the 11 carrier battle groups and their infrastructure require ***88,000*** direct military personnel and ***140,000*** overall when you

include the usual support and overhead. Likewise, the active-duty force of the Marine Corps is ***175,000***, and that's entirely an instrument of invasion and occupation. It's totally unnecessary for a homeland defense.

In short, fully ***315,000 or 60%*** of the current active-duty force of the Navy/Marine Corps functions in the service of Empire. So, if you redefine the Navy's missions to focus on strategic nuclear deterrence and coastal defense, it is evident that more than half of the Navy's force structure is not necessary for homeland security. Instead, it functions in the service of global power projection, policing of the sea lanes from the Red Sea to the East China Sea and platforming for wars of invasion and occupation.

Overall, the current Navy/Marine Corps budget stands at about ***$236 billion*** when you include $59 billion for military personnel, $81 billion for O&M, $67 billion for procurement, $26 billion for RDT&E, and $4 billion for all others. A $96 billion or ***40% cut,*** therefore***,*** would still leave ***$140 billion*** for the core missions of a Fortress America defense.

Among the services, the $246 billion contained in the Air Force budget is considerably more heavily oriented to a Fortress America versus Empire-based national security posture than is the case with the Army and Navy. Both the Minuteman land-

based leg of the strategic triad and the B-52 and B-2 bomber forces are funded in this section of the defense budget.

And while a significant fraction of the budget for the manning, operations, and procurement of conventional aircraft and missile forces is currently devoted to overseas missions, only the airlift and foreign base component of those outlays inherently function in the service of Empire.

Under a Fortress America defense, therefore, a substantial part of the conventional air power, which includes upwards of 4,000 fixed wing and rotary aircraft, would be repurposed to homeland defense missions. Accordingly, upwards of 75% or $180 billion of the current Air Force budget would remain in place, limiting the savings to just $65 billion.

Finally, an especially sharp knife would be brought down upon the ***$181 billion*** component of the defense budget which is for the Pentagon and DOD-wide overhead operations. Fully ***$110 billion*** or 61% of that huge sum–again more than 2X the total military budget of Russia–is actually for the army of DOD civilian employees and DC/Virginia based contractors which feast upon the Warfare State.

In terms of homeland security, much of these expenditures are not simply unnecessary–– they are actually counter-productive. They constitute the taxpayer-funded lobby and influence-peddling force that keeps the Empire alive and fully funded on Capitol Hill via lavish appropriations for every manner of consultancy, NGO, think tank, research institute and countless more.

Even then, a 38% allowance or $70 billion for the Defense Department functions (which include the hidden by currently massive over-funding of the CIA and other intelligence agencies) would more than provide for the true needs of a Fortress America defense.

Overall, therefore, downsizing the DOD muscle would generate $410 billion of savings on a FY 2025 basis. Another $50 billion in savings could also be obtained from eliminating most funding for the UN, other international agencies, security assistance and economic aid.

Adjusted for inflation through the next four years of Trump's term, the total savings would eventually come to $500 billion year.

Fortress America Budget Savings:

- Army: $140 billion.
- Navy/Marine Corps: $96 billion.
- Air Force: $65 billion.
- DOD agency-wide: $111 billion.
- UN contributions and foreign economic and humanitarian aid: $35 billion.
- International Security Assistance: $15 billion.
- Total Savings, FY 2025 basis: $462 billion.
- 8% inflation adjustment to FY 2029: +$38 billion.
- Total FY 2029 Budget Savings: ***$500 billion.***

At the end of the day, the time to bring the Empire home is long overdue. The $1.3 trillion annual cost of the Warfare State (including international operations and veterans) is no longer even remotely affordable–-and it has been wholly unnecessary for homeland security all along.

All of this should have been obvious long ago, but the Overton Window was so narrow that the sheer nakedness of the Empire could not be spoken about in polite company. But now Donald Trump has done exactly that, and it will make all the difference in the world.

So let President Trump's tripartite summit happen soon and begin the great defunding of the world's hideously bloated

Warfare States. The latter is now 100-years overdue, but, at last, Donald Trump may be the best hope for peace since August 1914.

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https://www.lewrockwell.com/2025/02/david-stockman/hallelujah-president-trump-actually-wants-to-give-peace-a-chance/